

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

What to Do if You Find a Dead Polar Bear

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is the federal agency responsible for monitoring polar bear populations in the United States. As part of this effort, FWS biologists are working to obtain information on the condition and health of these animals. Recovering the carcass of a polar bear that has died recently of natural causes provides an important opportunity to aid in monitoring the health of polar bear populations. For example, a small tooth extracted from a polar bear skull allows scientists to estimate the animal's age, while marrow from a leg bone can be used to assess body condition and health.

We need your help. If you find a polar bear carcass or partial remains, please contact the FWS Marine Mammals Management Office in Anchorage at 1-800-362-5148. You will be asked to provide the following information about the animal, and, if possible, take photographs and collect the skull and femur (biggest front leg bone):

- Location where the carcass was found (GPS location, if possible)
- Estimated length, girth (circumference), and weight
- Sex and age class (cub of the year, yearling, sub-adult or adult)

- Body condition (see diagram on back)
- Presence of ear tags, collar, or other identifying features
- Possible cause of death (for example: open wounds, scars, broken bones)
- Estimated time of death (less than or more than 24 hours see below)

It is especially valuable to biologists to quickly obtain samples from animals that are frozen or have died within 24 hours. If you find a polar bear that is frozen or has died within 24 hours, please call the FWS Marine Mammals Management office immediately. The FWS will arrange for samples to be shipped to Anchorage. The carcass is less than 24 hours old if:

- Carcass is intact and not scavenged
- Eyes are present and not wrinkled or shrunken
- No foul odor or dark brown/black fluid leaks from carcass
- Fur does not pull free in clumps when grasped
- No maggots or fly eggs are on or under the body

Thank you for your assistance. Your help in collecting this information is very much appreciated.



Scientists investigate a polar bear mother killed at her den site by an adult male polar bear.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 1 800/344 WILD http://www.fws.gov

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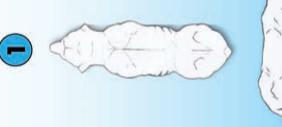
Visit the Marine Mammals home page: http://alaska.fws.gov/polarbear



Polar Bear Score Card: A Standardized Fatness Index

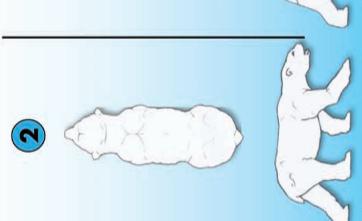


lustrations by Doug Lindstrand





tion, no fat palpable between vertebrae, ribs, and hip bones externally visible without palpa-Skinny emaciated appearance, skin and muscle over the dorsal body, hips, or lower rump.



THIN

Thin, vertebrae and hip bones amounts of fat detectable on (but not ribs) partially visible, easily palpable under the skin, little/ no fat between skin and muscle over the back, small



ble, upper 1/3 to 1/2 of the spinal column can be felt under the tween skin and muscle over rear half of body, thickening slightly Average healthy appearance, vertebrae / hip bones not visiskin, detectable layer of fat bebut detectably over lower rump.



FAT

rubbed above the rump will initi-Fat, vertebrae / hip bones not visible, palpation reveals fat defat, fat thick over rump, a hand ate ripples in the skin over the hip bones difficult to feel through posited over upper vertebrae,

VERY FAT

Obese, vertebrae /hip bones layer of fat is apparent between skin and muscle 2/3 of the above rump sets off waves of undetectable by palpation, thick way up the back & over rump, a hand rubbed on lower back rolling fat, possibly jiggling.

Condition: This is a subjective determination of bear's body condition based on assessment of body fat